

# EU'S NORMATIVE POWER STRUCTURE IN THE SCOPE OF THE SYRIA PROBLEM

## Suriye Sorunu Kapsamında AB'nin Normatif Güç Yapısı

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### ABSTRACT

The EU, emphasizing the principles of human rights and democratization, which is an important part of its foreign policy towards third countries, put the "human rights condition" in the foreground and stipulated this in the partnership agreements. The EU aims to improve relations with an emphasis on human rights and democracy as well as developing trade relations in its recent relations with the East and the South.

After the end of the Cold War process, the normative power structure of the EU was expressed by Manners in order to explain the EU's capacity to influence international politics in the new order formed. The EU's approach to the events that started in Syria with the Arab Spring is examined in the study within the scope of normative values. Due to the migrations after 2010, the Union has not been able to develop an effective mechanism for the increase in xenophobia and the migration problem. The EU, which could not predict what would happen to the uprisings in the Arab geography and the problem in Syria, preferred to follow the process instead of being a party to the process by approaching with normative values. When the EU's practices have been examined, it is seen that it has not been successful in developing an effective discourse with an emphasis on human rights and democracy. The success of the EU, approaches the problem on the axis of security and shows the limitations of being a normative power, cannot be mentioned.

**Keywords:** European Union, Syria, Norm, Power, Normative Power

### ÖZET

AB, üçüncü ülkelere yönelik dış politikasının önemli bir parçası olan insan hakları ve demokratikleşme ilkelerine vurgu yaparak, "insan hakları şartını" ön plana sürerek, bunu ortaklık anlaşmalarında şart koşturmuştur. AB, son zamanlarda Doğu ile olan ilişkilerinde ticaret ilişkilerini geliştirirken yanı sıra insan hakları ve demokrasiye vurgu yaparak ilişkileri geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Soğuk Savaş sürecinin bitmesiyle oluşan yeni düzende, AB'nin uluslararası siyaseti etkileyebilme kapasitesini açıklamak amacıyla, AB'nin normatif güç yapısı Manners tarafından dile getirilmiştir. Arap Baharıyla birlikte Suriye'de baş gösteren olaylara AB'nin yaklaşımı normatif değerler kapsamında çalışmada incelenmektedir. 2010 sonrası yaşanan göçler nedeniyle Birlik içerisinde yabancı düşmanlığının arttığı ve göç sorununa yönelik etkili bir mekanizma geliştiremediği görülmektedir. Arap coğrafyasında isyanların ve Suriye'deki sorunun ne olacağını kestiremeyen AB, normatif değerlerle yaklaşım süreci taraf olmak yerine, izlemeyi tercih etmiştir. AB'nin uygulamalarına bakıldığı zaman, insan hakları ve demokrasi vurgusuyla etkili bir söylem geliştirmede başarılı olmadığı görülmektedir. Soruna güvenlik ekseninde yaklaşan AB'nin başarısından bahsetmek mümkün görünmemekte ve normatif güç olabilmesinin önündeki sınırlılıklarını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Avrupa Birliği, Suriye, Norm, Güç, Normatif Güç

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The EU has tried to be active and effective in the international system with certain power structures. In addition to the "civil-military" power attributed to the EU, the normative power structure emphasized by Ian Manners has also been added. In the international system, The EU has been described as a "civil power" with Duchene and a "soft power" with Christopher J. Hill. Manners (2008: 46) states that he supports a set of normative principles that are applicable within the United Nations (UN). It is stated that it is possible to observe and develop international law with the ethics of the normative power of the EU and within the principles of the UN. The migration movement from Syria to the west and the EU's attitude towards the Syrian problem are analyzed through the normative power identity. The normative power identity attributed to the EU is explained with a focus on the Syrian problem and the scope of the subject is narrowed by this field.

The EU inspires many countries as it is the most advanced region in the world in terms of human rights and democratic standards. The EU maintains its normative power with conditionality to the neighboring countries through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the Mediterranean Neighborhood. Although aid or membership, which was initially reward-reinforcing, was unlikely, ENP members had no problems in adapting to EU conditions (Mammadova, 2017: 3). As relations progressed and expectations increased, this transformative power of the EU found to be ineffective or limited. The award offered within the scope of conditionality of the EU's conditionality, remains relatively inadequate, explains its low impact (Burlyuk and Shapovalova, 2017: 38). The inconsistent and ineffective practices of the EU, which has conditional relations with Eastern countries<sup>1</sup>, creates limiting effect on its normative power (Börzel and Lebanidze, 2017: 19).

The EU, that adopts normative values, tries to implement the culture of democracy in a two-way manner by forcing its dynamics both within and against the outside. This study contributes to the field with the question of how successful of the EU with the impact of the normative and transformative power. After briefly mentioning the definition of power in international relations in the first part of the article, the features of the normative power concept of the EU will be discussed in the second part. The process will be processed through the normative values revealed by Manners. The EU's emphasis on human rights and democracy and how credible it is across the world will be examined. The concept of normative power that the Union members still cannot digest, is the biggest obstacle for the EU to establish norms. In the third part of the study, the EU's approach to the Syrian problem is evaluated through normative values and the normative power structure is criticized. The EU's approach to the Syria problem is found to be problematic and inconsistent, and has been determined that it does not act in harmony with the normative power structure.

## 2. POWER IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The main purpose of the state in international relations is to gain power and survive. Morgenthau (1954: 78), described power as an effort to exert control over other people's thoughts and actions. Nye (2004: 2) defined it as one's ability to influence others in order to achieve desired results. While the concept of power characterizes hard or military power in realist theories, the concept of power is used in a broader sense in idealist theories. Waltz (1988: 619), one of the neo-realist writers, stated that the main purpose of states is not to gain power, but to provide security. Jackson (2004: 175), one of the structuralist theorists in which the normative structure is included, states that the international system is socially constructed by placing the elements of culture and identity at the core of international relations.

While the end of the Cold War symbolized the end of the bipolar structure all over the world, this change, which could affect its security and stability, caused the EU to look at the event from a multidimensional perspective. The EU, has new neighbors, has new threats as well as new opportunities with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The foreign policy of Russia, which is directly exposed to the EU's moves to establish its own liberal order in the surrounding geography, coincides with the EU foreign policy (Haukkala, 2015: 27).

Normative power is the ability of any actor to impose its own value judgment on other actor/s or to change existing value judgments. Manners (2002: 242), who is a defender of the social constructivism theory, emphasizes the intellectual power of the EU rather than the material power elements. Manners (2002: 236) mentions about power based on rules and unity values, rather than physical power. In this sense, it cannot be denied that the EU has imposed its own norms and regulations in many parts of the world. The EU spreads its normative values such as sustainable development, social solidarity, human rights, democracy and the rule of law around the world. The EU, that has a certain economic power, can also change the behavior of other nations through norms and values at the same time.

## 3. NORMATIVE POWER AND NORMATIVE POWER STRUCTURE OF THE EU

Manners (2002: 238), who describes normative power as the ability to shape or change the norm in international relations, defines the EU as a new and different actor in the international system. Manners (2002: 238) argued that it is more appropriate to look at the ideas and values of the EU in order to understand its power. Diez (2005: 615) defines power as an instrumentally normative power, which is not only military or not only economic, but also operates through ideas and thoughts. The EU, the structures it

<sup>1</sup> The authors mention Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, Belarus, Ukraine and Georgia as Eastern countries.



has created, is trying to be an influential actor and in the position that determines the norm in its relations with third countries.

The EU does not aim for the hard power of the military presence, but for a soft leadership that comes from the power of norms and values. Although Manners reconsidered this argument in 2006 in light of the EU's attempts to strengthen its military presence under the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the EU's emphasis on normativity is on the way to gaining global use. In the following process, Manners based the EU's normative power on its success in "moving world policy away from the norms, standards and instructions of the state-centered fixed expectations".

**Table 1.** The EU's Normative Basis

Founding Principles	Tasks and Objectives	Stable Institutions	Fundamental Rights
Liberty	Social solidarity	Guarantee of democracy	Dignity
Democracy	Anti-discrimination	Rule of law	Freedoms
Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms	Sustainable development	Human rights	Equality Solidarity
Rule of law		Protection of minorities	Citizenship Justice
Treaty base-set out in art. 6 of TEU	Treaty base-set out in arts. 2 of TEC and TEU, arts 6 and 13 of TEC	Copenhagen criteria- set out in the conclusions of the June 1993 European Council	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

**Source:** Manners (2002: 243)

The EU uses normative power as political discourse to justify its actions. The EU strives to disseminate certain normative values throughout the world. Manners, who divides the normative values of the EU into five main categories (Table 1); has grouped that the peace is at the center, respecting the idea of freedom, democracy, law and human rights. These norms, the EU has determined, have enabled it to be more than its own sum, not to be content with only military or civilian power.

Social solidarity, anti-discrimination, sustainable development and good governance are described as four sub-units (Manners, 2002: 242-43). Declarations, agreements, policies, a set of criteria and conditions are the arguments that constitute normative values (Trott, 2010, 13). The norms that are part of the founding foundations of the EU are decisive for the Union. The declarations, treaties, criteria and policies that the EU has been carrying out for 70 years constitute the normative basis of the EU. In Articles 1 and 2 of the Lisbon Treaty (2007: 10-12), which is the last founding Treaty of the EU, stated that the EU is founded on the values of democracy, human rights, equality and the rule of law. Abstract terms such as peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law became more concrete and gained a constitutional basis with the Lisbon Treaty. The EU has been inspired by many countries and tried to be imitated since it is the most advanced region in the world in terms of human rights and democratic standards. The EU has emphasized the principles of human rights and democratization, which are an important part of its foreign policy towards third countries, put the "human rights clause" in the foreground and stipulated it in the partnership agreements (The European Commission, 1978: 78).

Gulde (2011: 24) does not deny what the EU's foreign policy is, that the EU has formed its own foreign policy and has become an important actor in the international system. The EU effectively uses sustainable development, climate change and environmental policies among the normative instruments that strengthen its actor in international politics. Environmental issues became one of the most basic policies of the EU *acquis* and became the pioneer of sustainable development and climate change discussions in the international system after 1970. Thus, the EU has become an important actor in the international system in many areas.

The EU expresses a political identity identified with its values. The EU focuses on shaping norms in the international system by putting its norms at the center of foreign relations. The EU, which abolished the death penalty, became a norm-setting structure in the world with democratic norms and gained an international identity different from other actors. The EU is trying to introduce itself as a sponsor, defender and pioneer of international law by using instruments such as conditionality and sanction to improve human rights, (Scheipers & Sicurelli, 2007: 441-457).

The institutional and discursive framework created by the intergovernmental structure of the Council of the EU and the supranational structure of the European Commission formed the backbone of the understanding of "Europeanisms" defined normatively through free trade, good governance, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. The EU has used enlargement and neighborhood policy as a normative power.

The EU has made compliance with its own norms and values a prerequisite for developing its foreign relations with the other side in the design of its foreign policy in general, enlargement and neighborhood policies in particular. The EU has developed a norm-based entity as its main method of conflict, peace-building and sustainable development initiatives and negotiation tools, thus distinguishing itself from other global actors. The lack of a dominant military presence does not always confirm the impression of being a global normative power.

The conditionality policy that the EU has followed with the countries it has relations with is an effort to spread its own norms and values non-militarily. The EU, which has implemented this process against the outside, has tried to apply these values within itself, and has brought a binding provision in its decisions. The EU has implemented a successful conditionality policy in this sense, by requiring candidate countries to have a stable and democratic state system with the Copenhagen Criteria. The EU, which bases its conditionality policy on economic aid in its relations with third countries, has carried out the conditionality process by using negative tools in cases where it failed. The commitment to respect, promote and protect human rights and democratic principles has been an essential element of the EU's relationship with third countries (Commission of the European Communities, 1995: 5). After this process, aid and bilateral relations have been carried out conditionally, associating with the existence of human rights and democracy.

The EU spreads its norms in two different ways through contagion and transference (Manners, 2002: 244-45). The EU, that has a certain power and attractiveness, is imitated by other states and its contagion effect is unintentional. The EU uses the transference effect with its successive conditionality policies that it has established with the political and economic relations it has established with third states. Trading with third parties is carried out in the exchange of assistance or technical assistance. While the EU provides antecedent conditionality for possible candidate countries through the Copenhagen criteria, it imposes an obligation to comply with certain conditions after the legal relationship, such as Africa, is an example of post-conditionality.

The EU has applied the principle of democratic conditionality to the candidate countries with the enlargement process. Countries that have a relationship with the EU on the basis of membership or partnership gain economic privilege by providing access to the EU market. The EU's imposition of norms in response to these economic privileges refers to its normative power. While the EU's conditionality policy is based on economic power on the basis of rational choice, conditionality is compatible with normative power in the structuralist approach.

#### 4. EU'S NORMATIVE APPROACH TO THE SYRIA PROBLEM

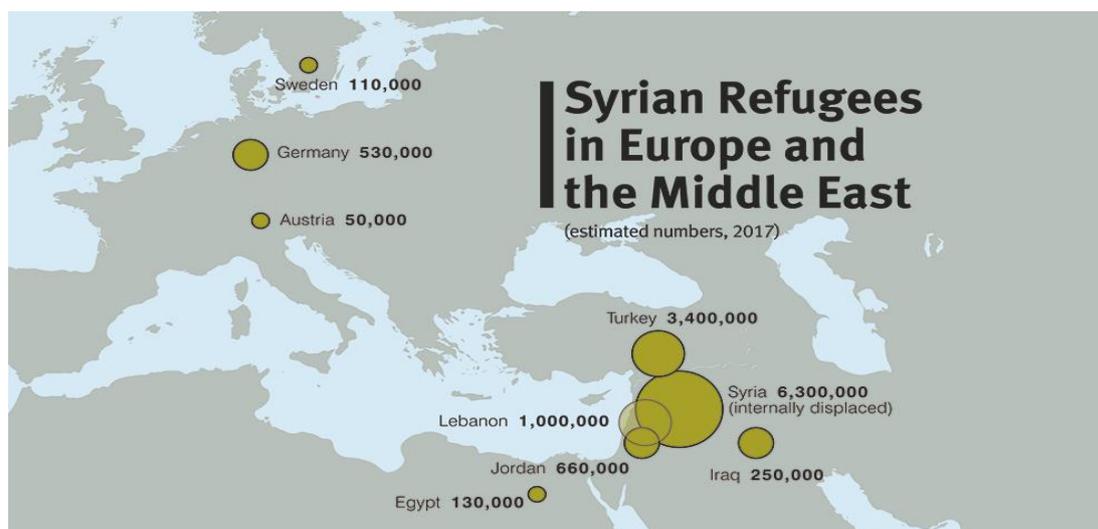
Acting with the principles of peace and freedom after the II. World War, the EU emphasized its difference from communism by asserting the norms of democracy and rule of law during the Cold War process. The EU put forward the condition of democratization on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria for the Eastern European countries that left from the Soviet Union after the collapse. The EU has tried to spread its norms by offering the promise of membership to the Eastern European countries. The Copenhagen criteria, that the EU adopts and cares, are the conditions that highlight its normative power. The criteria listed under three headings are the adoption of political, economic and Community legislation and harmonization is desired. Under the heading of political criteria; these conditions are harmonized with EU conditions by third countries with the establishment of institutions that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and minority rights and

The EU tries to be a separate power with different approaches on the world stage, with norms such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the international system where anarchy prevails. EU countries have laid the foundations of the EU through a supranational integration model that has never been tried before in their own territories and strengthened with certain criteria. The European Coal and Steel Community was established under the leadership of six states in a neo-functionalist way, and it moved from economic union to political integration with its unique (*sui generis*) structure. The European Community, which established communities such as the EEC and EURATOM in 1957 with the economic success, took the name of the European Union in 1993. The EU countries, which give weight to the supranational structure in a way that cannot be seen in the world, started to occupy a place in the world in terms of volume and to gain a certain power in the system. Manners (2008: 47), who sees the EU as a norm-forming structure, states that the EU creates a certain sphere of influence with normative power.

The EU initiated the privileged partnership with the Eastern and Southern coasts of the Mediterranean in 1995 with the “European Mediterranean Partnership” (Euromed) at the Barcelona Conference. It is aimed to protect and develop peace, economic prosperity, stability, human rights and democratic values with Mediterranean countries. It has also enabled the development of political and security dialogue with countries that have developed economic relations with Euromed. EU countries have realized that Europe's stability and prosperity are related to its southern neighbor states with the closer dialogue process. The EU has realized that reflecting its democratic values from Europe to other regions benefits both itself and third states in the future. The EU is updating its investment and economic support plans with its Southern neighbors, following the COVID-19 pandemic process with Euromed in 2021. There are initiatives that include growth, build prosperity and increase trade and investment within this plan.

The externalization process of EU migration policies has started since the early 1990s (Hallvik, 2009: 2). The EU has tried to control the migration process by signing cooperation agreements with third countries in the transfer of certain rules. It has aimed to solve the migration mobility before reaching the European borders (Erdem, Atalay and Kaya, 2020: 111). The EU made externalization policies such as the 1990 Dublin Regulations, the ENP in 2004, the partnerships initiated with Eastern and Southern countries in 2007, the EU Readmission Directive in 2008 and The Migration Partnership Framework in 2015. The Dublin Regulation<sup>2</sup>, which is the cornerstone of the most important policies of the European immigration policy, has been criticized for not producing the desired results and paving the way for the collapse of the immigration system (Lavenex, 2018: 1197). This policy, which follows a protectionist policy, has been prepared with a perspective focused entirely on the EU's own security. Lavenex (2018: 1195) states that the EU, which carries out protectionist demands and protectionist policies simultaneously, acts as an organized hypocrite. The externalization process has been shaped by different historical events and in the short term, many agreements have been realized in the EU's direction. The externalization approach has been found to be inefficient in the long run. Adopting the policy of externalization, the EU has become an actor that does not/could not produce a solution with its border security and security-oriented approaches. The EU had to deal with immigration from Syria and the south, with a record number of irregular migrants in 2015.

The EU approached the Syrian problem, which broke out with the Arab Spring, with its Southern neighborhood policy. The EU, which could not produce a policy during the Arab Spring process, could not have a decisive influence on the events (Bremberg, 2016). Unable to predict what would happen after the Arab Spring, the EU acted with security concerns rather than democracy. The EU has been in a dilemma between being involved or not to be involved in the Syrian problem that has started since 2011. It has adopted stricter and accusatory policy against the Syrian regime with the increasing influx of refugees after 2015. The EU is torn between the normative truths of foreign policy and the threat/reality of terrorism and immigrants. Instead of taking sides with the demands of the people against the oppressive governments, The EU could not stand for a democracy-centered structure with an impartial attitude in the Arab Spring (Isaac, 2012).



**Figure 1.** Syrian Refugees in Europe and the Middle East (Source: Raisher, 2018.)

<sup>2</sup> The Dublin Regulations were revised in 2003, 2011, 2013 and 2015, with the same provisions.

The largest immigration influx after the II. World War took place with the civil war in Syria (Figure 1). A total of 6.5 million Syrians have left their lands since 2011. Turkey is the country exposed to the largest immigration influx. Migrants crossing into the EU via Greece are moving westward. The most fundamental disagreement that arose in the point of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility was the point of reducing and sharing all kinds of burdens of the countries on the eastern and southern borders of the EU, especially Italy and Greece, which were the first and most exposed to the migration wave (Alkan, 2019: 559). The EU, which preferred to postpone the asylum seekers outside its borders, preferred the way of sending back those who do not comply with the international protection criteria by activating the legislative process (Penev, 2017: 21). These policies of the EU, which deprived asylum seekers of official entry routes to Europe, have reached situations that may damage the legitimacy of the EU in time. The "Readmission Agreement" signed with Turkey and the agreements signed with Libya led to the rise of reactions that the EU violated international law.

The EU produces preventive policies due to the global migrant movement. Legislation and agreements, increased detention centers, signed readmission agreements and tighter border protection measures are some of the preventive measures. The security oriented "Fortress Europe" paradigm, has necessitated the implementation of a tougher immigration regime in Turkey, as the EU's border regime policies have been externalized to include neighboring countries (Hess, 2010: 102). A democratic and inhumane policy process has been carried out as a result of the mutual pragmatic relationship between Turkey and the EU. The 1951 Refugee Convention on the status of refugees is based on the principle that a state should not return an asylum seeker against the possibility of persecution. Although the EU, which emphasizes the democratic structure and human rights, resorting to such actions that would contradict the concepts of transparency and judicial accountability that form the basis of democratic administration, may seem like a solution in the short run, but may backfire in the long run. The recent immigration phenomenon has triggered xenophobia in the EU and led to the rise of the anti-democratic far right in some countries (Gattinara, 2017: 322). The rise of the far right in European countries seriously hampers the normative values of the Union.

The EU aimed to ensure mutual stability and security by trying to strengthen its relations with the surrounding countries with the ENP. The policy, that established in 2004 to promote security and prosperity with the nearest neighbors (East and Southern neighbourhood), covers relations with sixteen countries. The EU also assists in the economic development and support of cooperating countries while focusing on good governance, democracy and the rule of law. The 2014-2020 ENP budget is 15.4 billion Euros (ENP, 2021). The EU has not adopted the same approach as every state in bilateral relations. Relations has been carried out depending on the interests of the EU and the progress of the relevant country. For this reason, the interests of the EU can override the emphasis on democracy and become effective in not being a reliable actor. There is still an opinion that the normative power of the EU is not different from the European colonial mentality (Mark, 2020: 1).

**Table 2.** European Union Trade with Syria (2017-2020)

	Import (Mio Euro)				Export (Mio Euro)			
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2017	2018	2019	2020
Agricultural Products	79	89	48	47	174	197	174	95
Industrial Products	12	14	11	14	353	446	424	237
Total	92	103	59	61	527	642	598	332

**Source:** Eurostat Comext-Statistical Regime 4, European Commission, 2021

EU-Syria relations are based on the bilateral cooperation agreement signed in 1977. Due to severe internal pressure in Syria, the EU has imposed an import ban on crude oil, petroleum products, gold, precious metals, and export restrictions on gas industry and telecom equipment since May 2011 (European Commission, 2021). Industrial products seen in Table 2 are products other than those listed above. The EU has made restrictions on agricultural products after 2018 in imports and exports. All activities related to Syria, one of Euromed partners, were suspended after 2011 and the funds and economic resources of individuals and organizations that support and/or benefit from the Syrian regime were frozen.

The EU found the Assad regime's use of force against civilians excessive, and issued a condemnation decision in 2011. Although the EU has developed many discourses on ensuring human rights in Syria, it has stated that these demands can only be realized after the ceasefire. The EU, describing the events in Syria as "civil war" after 2013, supported the Geneva talks (Turkmani and Haid, 2016: 10). Although

Germany, England and France stated that the Syrian regime should change, the EU could not go further than the rhetoric in total. This structure, which is not supported by military capacity, has limited the effectiveness of the EU in the field. The EU, far from being an effective actor that can support the normative power claim, believed that the Astana and Geneva talks would be the solution. The EU used its norms in the best way in the process of changing the regimes of the countries in the nearby geography (Sedelmeier, 2006: 18).

The ENP, which was reshaped by the EU in 2011, was insufficient to support the people who revolted against the dictators and the discourses had no effect outside the bureaucracy. The EU could not compensate for the volume it occupied in the Arab geography. The ineffectiveness of the EU in this process was based on two reasons. The EU, which has not been able to overcome the effects of the economic crisis in 2008, has not been able to provide the desired amount and form of economic support to the Arab geography. The gap between them has widened since the EU's discourse on democracy and human rights and practice did not match (Bicchi, 2014: 320).

The European External Action Service (EEAS), which was established with the Lisbon Treaty, was late in taking the desired decisions, had no experience in this process. The EU, which is both experiencing economic difficulties and lacking the necessary experience, has not been an active actor in this process. The peoples of the region, left alone with the Assad regime and terrorist organizations in Syria, could not overcome the problems. The EU has lost both the support of the people in the region and the interest of the dictators with the Assad regime's active re-takeover of the administration with the support of Russia and the concrete presence of the USA as another effective actor in the region. Today, it cannot be denied that the USA and Russia have consolidated their power in the region and are effective actors.

The European Council has decided to extend the restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until June 2022 under the ENP (European Council, 2021). These restrictive measures put into practice in 2011. The EU also included the companies and prominent businessmen fed by the war economy with the regime under the same restriction. Restrictive measures include a ban on oil imports, the freezing of the Syrian Central Bank's assets in the EU, and the use of other equipment that put pressure within the country (European Council, 2021). Syria High Representative Josep Borrell stated that he did not meet any of the democratic election criteria in the presidential elections held on May 26 2021 (EEAS, 2021). Displaced people, refugees and members of the diaspora stand for election in a safe and impartial environment without the threat of intimidation. However, the Syrian regime, which does not meet these conditions, continues to dominate the future of the country with these pressures. The EU supports that elections are held in a transparent and fair manner in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and under the supervision of the UN.

Normativity is based on the assumption that the norms desired to be propagated are seen as universal values and norms cannot be constructed nationally, legally and culturally. The norms that the EU wants to spread have also been subject to similar criticisms on the grounds that they were partial rather than universal. One of the main reasons why the EU is not perceived as a normative power outside its own borders is the doubt about the universality of European norms. The normative instability in the EU's foreign policy practices feeds the distrust and suspicion of the interlocutors of this policy. In order to increase the normative capacity of the EU, EU policy makers should ensure the continuous and stable implementation of normative policies. Such an approach would save its "normative power" from being a project that really claims to know what Europe is and what others should be.

The EU's national and supranational interests, norm-based foreign policy practices, claims of being an international actor weaken the EU's claim to normativity. An international actor aiming to be normative inevitably encounters a situation where norms are against interests. The effectiveness of the EU's normative policies is limited by the contribution of the member states to these policies. Normativeness cannot survive if member states do not contribute adequately. Normative institutionalism assumes that member states will demonstrate an unwavering adherence to norms despite their differing interests. On the one hand, member states have shown an unprecedented harmony in European history in terms of norm dissemination in free trade, fight against global warming and enlargement. On the other hand, world public opinion has witnessed many times their reluctance to comply with the norms in foreign policy practices. As long as the competition between norms and interests continues, the normativity of the EU will be problematic and unreliable.

Taking the Union for the Mediterranean project as an example, its focus on concrete projects has the potential to contribute constructively to the normativeness of the EU in areas such as sustainable development, combating climate change, renewable energy, conflict resolution and tolerance. The tangible and visible results of concrete projects also contribute to the perception of the EU as a global normative actor. The most important prerequisite for realizing this potential is that member states support the institutional and discursive framework of the EU with the belief that there is no acceptable alternative to normativity. For example, Germany, which is financially strong in the EU, rejected the proposals to increase the Mediterranean budget on the grounds that it would mean supporting France's traditional sphere of influence. Such personal or national behavior is an obstacle to the EU's desired performance. Sarkozy's presentation of a project similar to Mediterranean cooperation instead of EU candidacy for Turkey is a good example of the non-normative situation of the EU.

The EU draws attention to the aid it has given to trade and the international system, along with a multilateral diplomacy and great economic power to overcome international problems. However, since the EU had to share its trade dominance with countries such as the USA, China and India in the changing world, a discourse began to emerge that the EU turned to military power (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2005: 91). The military operations carried out by the EU in recent years show a picture that confirms this. Although the EU states that it does it to guarantee military power, peace and human values; Its emphasis on the development of military power and the EU's willingness to use it suggest that the EU has put civilian and normative values into the background. However, the failure of the member states to reach an agreement on the use of military capacity is the biggest obstacle in the EU's inability to show the desired development in this field. As seen in the Bosnia and Iraq wars, it is observed that the member states cannot reach an agreement on the use of military power, and this failure to reach an agreement prevents the EU from showing its real military power.

The EU tries to be effective in international politics by taking the least risk with the soft power elements and normative power tools used by it as an international actor. Implementation of intangible policies such as democracy, human rights and transparency presents a separate challenge. In this respect, it is a situation that shows the limitations of the EU to be a normative power. It does not seem possible to talk about the success of the EU with its democracy promotion-based policies towards Syria.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war have flocked to EU member states legally or illegally. EU countries, which are the final route of Syrians, have turned to non-normative choices such as closing the borders in an inhumane and unlawful way, bilateral agreements with Libya and the "Readmission Agreement" with Turkey in order to stop this migration. The EU has used its choice in a situation that may occur against itself even in humanitarian events, in a way that is far from the law and incompatible with humanitarian norms. This situation is not only a migration problem, but also a trauma with sociological, economic and material dimensions. This problem has turned into a humanitarian problem with the death of thousands of Syrians on difficult migration routes. The attitudes and practices of the EU in this process do not comply with the normative values emphasized by the EU. The EU has tried to take its precautions within the framework of security by keeping itself out of the problem as a spectator instead of being the norms determinant by following a policy that is far from being a playmaker. The EU, has tried to shape or direct international relations with the principle of human rights and democracy, could not produce an inclusive and effective policy in this process.

Manners, in his attempts to explain and define the normative features of the EU, emphasizes that "the sustainability of normativity depends on the perceptions of the actors that deal with it". If the normative power is not validated by its interlocutors, the problem of legitimacy of this power arises. In this context, normativity requires regional, global or external approval. In the absence of such verification, normativity is not a generally accepted phenomenon. The normative role of the EU emerges as a controversial issue and there is often no consensus among candidate or neighboring countries on this issue. Examining how the EU is perceived in Brazil, India and South Africa, Fioramonti and Poletti (2008: 167) point out that the normativity of Europe in the fields of trade, investment and democracy is perceived as "highly controversial, multifaceted and often unstable". This inference is also accepted as another indication that how the EU is perceived abroad contradicts the EU's own image. In addition, while explaining why the EU failed in most of its result-oriented evaluations, the emphasis that the EU is not a single, holistic actor or

consists of a series of actors within an institutional and discursive framework is shown as the lack of the EU.

Considering whether the EU is a normative power, we cannot consider the EU as a normative power since its own policies are not so effective that they cannot meet universal norms. Besides the lack of external approval, one of the reasons why the EU's normativity is still not fully valid is the lack of soundness of the argument that the EU's normative presence in the international system is unprecedented. Considering that European normativity initially presented itself as the counter-thesis of American foreign policy, the uniqueness of the EU's normativity depends on the continuation of Washington's military "hard" power. After September 11, American foreign policy and especially the invasion of Iraq has been established with the emphasis that the EU's own identity, European norms and values, is the opposite of the US military power. In fact, the Obama presidency has developed a discourse that can compete with the normativity of the EU in some areas. Moreover, the current international system lacks the existence of an ideal observer to objectively measure the consequences of an action. Therefore, the decision on the normative nature of the consequences of the action is linked to the judgment of the actors who are the addressees of the action. The measure of normativity has always remained subjective since there is no single authoritative and properly functioning objective structure in the international arena.

The EU, that is attributed to the importance to human value and democracy, causes to be defined as normative, has adopted a security-based approach in foreign policy. The EU has adopted an exclusionary approach in its migration policy, adopting a security-based approach such as border security and repatriation. Adopting an approach incompatible with normative principles in the Syrian issue, the EU has not been able to achieve unity in its own nation states and has conducted an unsuccessful foreign policy process. Considering its inability to solve the crisis in the field of foreign policy, its normative power and effectiveness is debatable. The EU, which provided indirect support for the solution of the crisis in Syria and could not carry out a successful policy with the discourses of democracy and diplomacy, could not act in harmony with the normative power practices. So, the EU can be considered as a limited normative power. Therefore, in order to deserve its own assertive discourse, the EU should not aspire to normativity on its own, but rather work to improve its current faltering normative capacity.

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